



# INDIANA DENTAL ASSOCIATION

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April 21, 2020

Governor Eric J. Holcomb  
Indiana Governor's Office  
200 W Washington Street, Room 206  
Indianapolis IN 46204

Commissioner Kristina Box, MD  
Indiana State Department of Health  
2 N Meridian Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Governor Holcomb and Commissioner Box:

Subject: Reopening Dental Offices for Full Treatment in Indiana

As the State of Indiana begins the process of restarting its economy and re-opening Indiana's businesses, on behalf of the 3,100 member dentists of the Indiana Dental Association, we thank you for allowing us to return to our practices and our Hoosier patients—helping to rebuild Indiana's dental delivery system.

As part of our association's effort to encourage safe practices when reopening, our COVID-19 Task Force drafted a collection of guidelines stemming from the Center for Disease Control, the State Department of Health, and various Occupational Safety and Health Administration recommendations. That guidance is attached.

## **Impact on Dental Practices and Hoosier Health**

While the current COVID-19 pandemic has created difficulties for many Indiana small businesses, it has been devastating for Indiana's dental offices. A recent American Dental Association survey revealed that in following state and federal guidance by treating dental emergencies only, the typical dental office is seeing less than 5% of its normal patient visits. This has had a significant impact on both the health of dental practices and of patients. For example:

- a delay in prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of dental disease will lead to more invasive and expensive procedures.
- Under normal conditions, approximately three Hoosiers are diagnosed with oral cancer every day. The majority of this detection is a result of regular dental visits and screenings—any delay in detecting and diagnosing oral cancer can lead to catastrophic consequences; including serious oral surgery, cancer treatments, and even death.
- Undiagnosed and untreated periodontal (gum) disease has been associated with a number of systemic health conditions, including heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and even pregnancy complications.

Executive Order 20-22 will allow Indiana dentists to diagnose and treat important dental conditions that will preserve oral and overall health throughout the state.

## Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Concerns: Request for Assistance

As you know, on March 16, Executive Order 20-04 was issued to preserve PPE for the fight against COVID-19 by mandating that all health care providers delay all non-essential procedures and surgeries, including routine treatment. As a result, all dental offices were shut down immediately; only opening to provide emergency dental care to their patients to keep them out of hospital emergency rooms. As a gesture of goodwill, many of our member dentists donated their PPE supply to local hospital and hospital systems. Now, as Indiana dentists plan for the transition back into the workforce and PPE becomes more available—either as a result of additional production, the importation of masks and supplies, or the ability to disinfect protective wear—we ask the State and the State Health Department for assistance in securing these much-needed protections.

### Dental Office Practices

For our part, Indiana's dentists are prepared and encouraged to take special precautions to limit patient interactions with one another and potential exposure to COVID-19. The safety precautions include but are not limited to: a detailed questionnaire before and at the outset of scheduled appointments, taking the temperature of the patient and/or guardian where possible, having patients wait in their car rather than the waiting room, and staggering patient appointments to reduce exposure to others while allowing time for disinfection. For detailed guidelines on our recommended "best practices," see the attachment. Most importantly, we are prepared to follow the guidelines set forth by the American Dental Association and the CDC on PPE's necessary for the safety of our patients and dental team members.

In addition, we also feel the dental community is uniquely positioned to provide testing both for both active COVID-19 and antibody testing. We can provide the most random sample possible, as we see the largest population of healthy Hoosiers on a daily basis and have the knowledge to conduct the test properly. When dental practices do reopen, we would ask you to consider them as effective vehicles for testing.

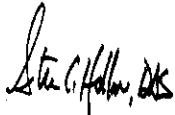
In conclusion, Indiana Dental Association members fully supported the State's decision to cease routine and non-emergency treatment temporarily to preserve PPE for hospital systems, but we now seek assistance in obtaining PPE for our own dental practices. We thank you for including us in your economic roll-out process, and we look forward to providing Hoosiers the oral health care services they so desperately need.

We look forward to your guidance on how to best obtain PPE.

Sincerely,



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Attachment



## **Indiana Dental Association COVID-19 Task Force: Interim Guidance and Recommendations**

IDA President Dr. Steve Ellinwood created the COVID-19 Task Force to develop and a distill a series of “best practices” for PPE guidance and patient safety using materials from the Center for Disease Control (“CDC”); the Indiana State Department of Health; the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (“OSHA”); and the American Dental Association. On Monday April 20, 2020 Governor Holcomb issued [Executive Order 20-22](#) which will allow dental offices to return to practice as early as April 27, 2020. This Executive Order allowing non-emergency and routine treatment will be revisited every seven days for the remainder of the crisis.

*Important note:* This guidance is only a recommendation from the COVID-19 Task Force and should not be construed as legal advice. These guidelines shall apply per CDC recommendations only for medium risk dental care. If new information arises from state, federal, or agency sources that contradicts any suggestions contained herein, you are required to comply with the updated state/federal/agency guidance and are encouraged to do any follow-up research necessary to ensure that your practice is complying with the most recent guidance or law. In addition, we have included hyperlink citations for most—if not all—of the recommendations below; if you have any questions or concerns about this guidance, feel free to reach out to the COVID-19 Task Force or any member of the IDA staff.

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### ***Before Dental Care Begins: Dental Office Management***

- All Dental Health Care Personnel (“DHCP”) should self-monitor for any respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath, sore throat) and check their temperature twice a day, regardless of the presence of symptoms. Dental offices should create a plan for whom to contact if an employee develops fever or respiratory symptoms.<sup>1</sup>
- Conduct an inventory of available PPE supplies [e.g., masks, gowns, gloves, and face shields].”<sup>2</sup>
- Remove magazines, reading materials, toys and other objects that may be touched by others and which are not easily disinfected.<sup>3</sup>
- Print and place signage (found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/stop-the-spread-of-germs.pdf>) in the dental office for instructing patients on standard recommendations for respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette and social distancing.<sup>4</sup>
- Schedule appointments far enough apart to minimize possible contact with other patients in the waiting room. Allow time to disinfect and set up the room for the next patient.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.ht>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/steps-to-prepare.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28916372>; <https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/oralhealth/assets/cov-dental-protocol-031720.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/infectioncontrol/pdf/safe-care2.pdf>; <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/risk-assessment.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://success.ada.org/en/practice-management/patients/coronavirus-frequently-asked-questions>

- Surfaces such as door handles, chairs, desks, elevators, and bathrooms should be cleaned and disinfected frequently.
- DHCPs should change from scrubs to personal clothing before returning home.

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### *Patient Safety: Effective Screening and Office Practices*

- Screen patient before the visit. Suggested questions to ask include: (1) Is the patient currently experiencing or has experienced in the last three weeks, signs of acute respiratory illness such as coughing, fever, and shortness of breath? (2) Has the patient had close contact with an individual diagnosed with COVID-19. If available, other testing used could include: temperature, pulse oximeter, and other COVID-19 testing. **(insert Link to ADA questions)**
- If a patient has a fever associated with a dental diagnosis (e.g., pulpal and periapical dental pain and intraoral swelling is present), but no other signs/symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., fever, sore throat, cough, difficulty breathing), they can be seen in dental settings with appropriate protocols and PPE in place.<sup>6</sup>
- CDC recommends that only asymptomatic patients, patients who have tested negative for COVID-19 infection, or recovered patients (after 3 days since resolution of signs and symptoms) be seen in dental settings.<sup>7</sup>
- DHCP should ensure that there are appropriate supplies for infection control etiquette, including (but not limited to) alcohol-based hand rub with 60-95% alcohol, tissues, and no-touch receptacles for disposal at healthcare facility entrances, waiting rooms, and patient check-ins.<sup>8</sup>
- Allow patients to wait in their cars and call the office to check in when they have arrived. They may wait in their personal vehicle or outside the facility where they can be contacted by mobile phone when it is their turn to be seen.<sup>9</sup>
- Discourage patients from bringing companions to their appointment, except for instances where the patient requires assistance (e.g., pediatric patients, people with special needs, elderly patients, etc.).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> [https://www.ada.org/~media/CPS/Files/COVID/ADA\\_Int\\_Guidance\\_Mgmt\\_Emerg-Urg\\_Dental\\_COVID19.pdf](https://www.ada.org/~media/CPS/Files/COVID/ADA_Int_Guidance_Mgmt_Emerg-Urg_Dental_COVID19.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html>

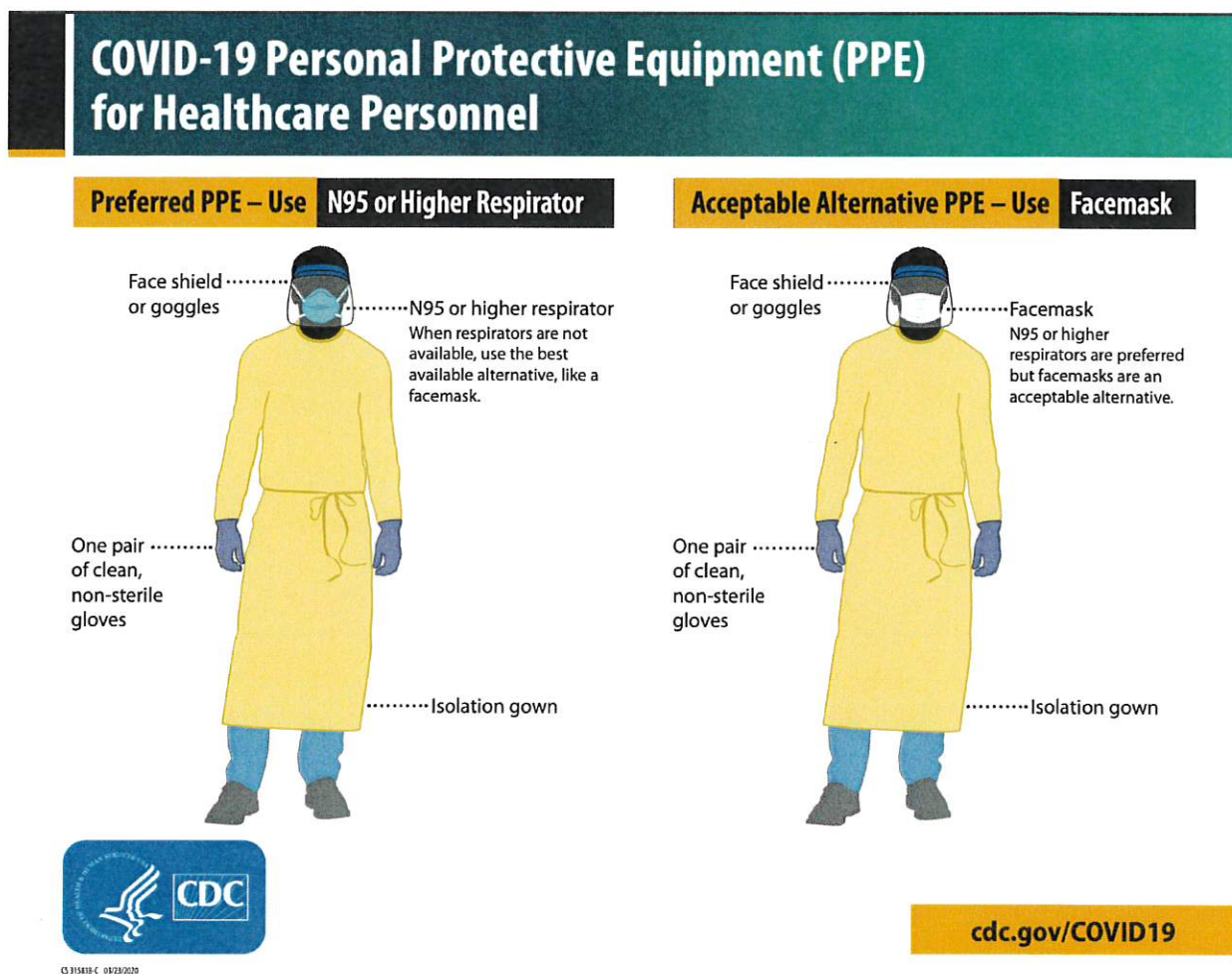
<sup>9</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html>

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fhcp%2Finfection-control.html#manage\\_access](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fhcp%2Finfection-control.html#manage_access)

## *During and After Dental Care: Management of Personal Protective Equipment (“PPE”)*

*If your dental office is unable to secure the appropriate PPE to safely operate, your practice should not reopen until it is obtained.*

- Reduce aerosol production as much as possible, as the transmission of COVID-19 seems to occur via droplets or aerosols, and DHCP should prioritize the use of hand instrumentation.
- Ensure DHCP practice strict adherence to hand hygiene, including: before and after contact with patients; after contact with contaminated surfaces or equipment; and after removing PPE.
- The CDC has published guidance on preferred and acceptable PPE<sup>11</sup>, additional information can be found [here](#).



<sup>11</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/COVID-19\\_PPE\\_illustrations-p.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/COVID-19_PPE_illustrations-p.pdf)

***Closing Remarks***

In his April 20, 2020 address, Governor Holcomb was very clear that the ability to reopen to elective and routine procedures in Indiana will be in place as long as the frontline hospital systems are able to secure their much-needed PPE. The IDA knows that obtaining your own supply of PPE for your office is a problem and the task force will continue to work on this supply chain issue going forward.